

1: Burrows--52
116, 552, 501, 782

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Sailing canoes and large paddling canoes are given the names of tracts of land. Sarfert recorded an additional point, that these are the tracts on which grew the breadfruit tree that furnished the timber for the boat. Though I was not told this in detail, it fits what was told. The name of the sailing canoe built for Tom during our stay is Melegubwol, after a breadfruit grove just inland from the canoe-house where the vessel was built. Asked whether these names are supposed to have power to bring a canoe safe home from overseas, Tom said they are. Although he was sometimes over-eager to give an affirmative answer, this one is supported by a similar idea in a prayer, intoned to the god Soupalele when a canoe is casting off for an overseas voyage:

Lay the anchor in the woods!
Lay the anchor in the woods,
O Soupalele!
Put my anchor in a huge tree in the interior!
Right in the middle,
The very middle of the land.
When my canoe goes,
Let me return to this land!"

"Songs for Divine Guidance

Seven songs were dictated by Tom as part of the navigator's lore. They seem to be both prayers and incantations, if we define prayer as an appeal for help to a divine being, and incantation as a song thought to have magical power in itself. Each song is accompanied by a bit of ritual, which reinforces its meaning as gesture reinforces the meaning of ordinary speech. But these are not mere optional gestures. They are essential to the proper utterance of the song. This seems to give them the character of magic, credited with power in itself, rather than of religion, appealing to an outside power. Yet the ritual can well be thought of as obeisance appropriate to an appeal, like a bow or salute to a human superior. It is my impression that the natives do not make the distinction between the two, but regard this behavior both as what we call magic and as what we call religion.

The texts of the songs will be given in the study of native art. One of them is an appeal to Sautā, a god not mentioned in the myths, for wisdom. [78] He is asked to illuminate the navigator's mind by lighting a fire within him. As he sings this, the navigator rubs over his chest sand, mixed with sea water taken from the point where land and water meet. A similar song, using the same figure of lighting a fire but not naming any particular deity, is uttered while cutting off the bud end of a coconut and mixing the juice with leaves of aro.

A third song, which Tom said was particularly advanced and hard to get, is intended to lighten the canoe so it will stay afloat. It invokes Loulemwau, whom Tom called 'god of the canoe.' It is sung while the navigator, holding a ripe coconut in its husk, bound about with a strip of coconut leaf, wades around his canoe, tapping the hull at the water-line with the coconut.

An appeal for fair weather is sung to the god Wëriëng. To sing this, the captain goes aboard with a piece of white young coconut leaf. This he taps against the sail as he sings, then ties bits of it to all the lines of the rigging.

Before the mast is set up, it is swept with a strip of white leaf, while the navigator sings a song to Ifëkerëp, god of the sea-lanes, asking him to bring the canoe safe to its port. A similar appeal for the return voyage is sung as the mooring line is untied from a tree, and rubbed back and forth against the landward side of the tree. In this song Soupalele, god of the navigator, is asked to anchor the canoe in the woods, in the center of the home island.

Far the longest and most comprehensive of the songs was described by Tom as his own special prayer for success at sea. It had been given by one of the gods of navigation--he did not know which one--to a navigator of ancient times, and handed down to his pupils from generation to generation ever since.

This song invoked not one god but a multitude of them, running up the number in a

1: Burrows--77-78
116, 502, 782

(1947-48)

Woleaians-3
Ifalik

final stanza from one hundred to ten thousand. It appeals for most of the gifts asked separately in the other songs: wisdom in seamanship, divine guidance of the canoe, strength and health for the navigator, fair weather, and shortening the distance between Ifalik and Woleai. As he begins singing it the navigator ties about his wrist a strip of white coconut leaf. He drinks a coconut for the gods, and offers a piece of taro and an umule fish. "

"Offering (iōiō) to a beneficent god.

The general pattern is that these offerings are made by a chief or specialist at the conclusion (or at some crucial stage) of an important undertaking. (Commonly a first offering of coconuts is followed by one of cooked food. The offering is accompanied by a brief spoken prayer of thanksgiving and appeal for continued help in the future). The following seem to be the principal occasions:

- (a) by the leader of a communal task (commonly a chief), at the beginning of the feast which celebrates its conclusion. The deity to whom the offering is made varies with the nature of the task.
- (b) by a healer, to Lugeilang, who is asked to make the treatment effective. One offering of coconuts, a later one of food.
- (c) by a master-carpenter, to Alulemas, when a building is completed. Coconuts are distributed to the workers; the juice that spurts from them when they are opened is regarded as the offering. The prayer offers thanks for success of the task, and asks for help with the next one. [189]
- (d) by a shipwright. Such an offering, at an early stage of the work, is described in the account of canoe building. When a canoe is completed, an offering of coconuts is laid beside it for Seilangi. The prayer announces the offering, and asks that the builder's next canoe may be a good one. Later, at the

feast for the workers, a package of fish and taro wrapped in a leaf is put into the sea for Seilangi.

- (e) by a navigator, to Aluluei. When a canoe enters the pass through the reef, outward bound on a voyage, the navigator offers, first two coconuts, later food and a new cloth. Asks protection from wind and rain and safe guidance to the port. These offerings are not thrown into the sea. The food is later eaten by the navigator and crew, the cloth kept for use."

"Another conspicuous religious emblem is the timás, a mat of white young coconut leaf a little more than a foot square, with the pointed ends of the leaflets projecting along one side in a stiff fringe. Numbers of these are plaited by the young men, taken to the house of the god - or sometimes elsewhere - to be endowed with divine power, then hung all about the shores of the inhabited islets. They are suspended from branches which overhang either the beach or - on the lagoon side - the water itself.

The ceremony of blessing these timás is brief, and not of itself an occasion for assembling the whole population. At Weluāra it sometimes accompanies one of the [195] regular ceremonies of invocation. In that case the prayer or incantation that confers power on the squares of mat is part of the regular song of invocation. Once the sound of a conch horn, blowing from FalārIk district, was explained as part of a ceremony of blessing timás. We were told it would be over before we could get there. Whether the usual hymn was also used on that occasion is not certain.

Once in position facing the shore, the squares of mat can be seen from some distance at sea, especially when they are fresh and of a bright ivory color, contrasting with their green background of leaves. They are thought to act as talismans and keep off evil sea-spirits."

According to legend, Alüelāp had some more adopted children; and among them Thelān and Paluelāp are especially important for the islanders. The former is the inventor of canoe-building, and it is to him that the natives dedicate the measuring string with two coconut pinnates (tjātš) hanging at the ends, and the canoe ax. The latter made the first sail, and he knows all the paths on the sea. For that reason, when the Captains want to be sure of reaching their goal safely, and of having a calm sea, they sacrifice a coconut and a mat to Paluelāp in the canoe house. His son Elülūe is his helper in everything.

3: Thilenius and Hellwig--245
116, 173, 782, 226

(1909-10) 1927

Woleaians
Aurupik

[LEM: Concerning an isolated house and grave, Hambruch was told:] the god Yongelap gave orders to the man Choiss in Yap to travel to Aurepik and there to create men and women out of a Spondyl shell so that the island would be populated. This was done, and Choiss became the father of a son, Raigumeng, whom Yongelap appointed as protector against typhoons. Raigumeng is revered like a god. The natives invoke him before they go fishing: "Raigumeng, give us fish!" On other occasions, e.g. before a sea voyage, offerings are made to him. Within the house many offerings were suspended: wreaths, necklaces, mats, coconuts, etc. Since Raigumeng's death his house and grave have to be kept in good condition.

28: Spiro--74 [3]
116, 776, 782, 335

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Alulumas, the patron saint of the house carpenters, receives a io-io at the completion of any construction job. He, too, receives two io-io, one of coconut and one of food. When the men drink the coconuts that are distributed after each construction work, the juice that squirts out of the nut as it is opened is accounted as a io-io, and the chief carpenter on the job asks, Alulemes that if 'I fix another one, no fall down on me. Now I finish one, I give you this coconut.'

When the men gather again for the customary feast, one or two days after the completion of the work, a portion of fish and taro is wrapped in a leaf, and placed in the ocean as a io-io to Alulemes, and the same words or words to that effect are uttered."

28: Spiro--74 [4]
116, 776, 782, 396

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"For a canoe construction it is Selang-i the patron saint of canoe carpenters, who receives the io-io. His too, is the dual offering of coconut and food. At the completion of the canoe the head carpenter places a coconut along side of the canoe, and says, 'I give you this coconut; suppose I make another canoe, (assist me so that it will be) very fine.' Again when the men gather for their feast, the head carpenter expresses the same sentiments, and discards food from his plate, as a io-io to Selang-i."

28: Spiro--74-75
116, 776, 782, 502

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Aluluei is the recipient of the io-io when an ocean voyage is undertaken. As [75] the canoe leaves the lagoon and enters the ocean two coconuts are dropped overboard for Aluluei, and the navigator says, 'Look out my canoe, no drift away; wind and rain no take off.' But also offered to him are breadfruit, taro, and a new lavalava. These, however, are only symbolic offerings, since the food is consumed when the destination is reached, and the lavalava is brought back with the canoe, to be worn.

The io-io for a canoe journey is not the only ritual performed. Before boarding a canoe for an overseas trip, one of the sailors beats the water with a coconut leaf, so that it will remain calm. Then, the captain takes a coconut, and while asking Paluelpa for a safe trip, he strikes the prow of the canoe on all sides with the coconut."

28: Spiro--145 [4]
116, 264, 782

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Usually, when the meal is prepared, a dish of food is set aside for the benevolent alus of the household, and the chief of the household recites a few words of thanksgiving, thanking the alus for protecting the members of the household. On the other hand, if the alus were a poor protector, and illness had befallen some of the people, no food is offered him. This offering is called either agai-l'alus or maipi-l'alus."

CHAPTER VI

FISH WATCHING

DANCE rehearsals continued almost every night, and it was clear that we were expected to attend despite the interference with both work and sleep. Somehow I didn't understand until some time later that this dance business was largely a response to a request of Ted's. He had particularly wanted, during his first stay on the island, to see some of the important traditional dances, the ur dances, but no such ceremonies had taken place. Before we started for Ifaluk this time, Ted had written to the anthropologist of the Trust Territory Government, expressing the hope that we would be there in the proper season for the dances. The anthropologist had passed the word on to the chiefs by way of the trade ship which called at the island about a month before we arrived. 535 123

It turned out that we were too late. The proper time for the ur dances is at the close of the period of ceremonial fishing by torchlight for flying fish. But the Ifalukians, wishing to please Ted, rearranged their ceremonial schedule. They couldn't bring the flying fish out of season, but they could perform the dances. 726 535 [36]

The dances were really, as Ted explained, a religious ceremonial designed to please the gods. But, as Ted further noted, this did not mean that the content had to take some special religious form: the kindly gods of Ifaluk enjoyed whatever interested the people. 782 796

Religion seemed in general very unobtrusive on Ifaluk. There were sacred spots like the altar in the back of the Fan Nap (completely unused during our stay); there was the wild tangle of vegetation in sacred 778

Fish Watching

83

corpse is wrapped in seemingly endless coils of rope, weighted with stones, and taken out to sea for burial. The canoe used for this then cannot be touched for four days, four being in general the magic number on Ifaluk. [764] [801]

The alus, the spirits of the dead, are sometimes benevolent and sometimes malevolent, apparently depending on the character of the person from whom they came. The malevolent spirits cause all sorts of trouble, including most kinds of illness. Mel Spiro, in his psychological studies of the Ifalukians, found fear of alus to be dominating both consciously and subconsciously. We had no encounters with alus, but we didn't seek any, and the attitude toward alus of the young men who worked with us seemed to be largely ritual, but we did not try to probe into their psychology. [775] [753]

In theory the dances, then, were designed to please the alus, both the high gods and the ordinary spirits. The elaborate dances which required these endless nightly rehearsals, were surely for the high gods; but all of the alus, like all of the people, must have enjoyed them. The rehearsals finally ended in the big show, which was held on July 22nd, at midday in the schoolhouse clearing. [782] [796] [776]

Don and I were off taking advantage of a low tide to work on profiles of the reef when a messenger came to tell us the dance was about to start. When we got there the men had already formed into a line along the north margin of the clearing. They were all dressed up, with bows of the ivory-like unfolded coconut leaves on arms and legs, with coconut-leaf skirts over loin-cloths, with necklaces of flowers and of the greenish-ivory coconut leaves, with garlands of flowers, and surmounting all, a block of pith over the forehead, wrapped in red paper and tinfoil (from cigarette packages) and bearing a cluster of tall white feathers (perhaps from the fairy terns; but more probably and prosaically from chickens). Faces were marked with red turmeric, a streak of red along the jawline, and dabs on the cheeks and arms. [126] [301] [293] [177] [237]

They put on a fine show. Some of the pieces were songs or chants, with an accompaniment of stamping and clapping. Others involved more complicated gesturings and posturings. In one, two men standing with outstretched arms pantomimed man-of-war birds—tilting, soaring and gliding—while the rest knelt facing each other, chanting the